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THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2014

Pot farm pulling up roots

The medicinal marijuana grow-op on
Pinecrest Rd. is moving elsewhere in
Niagara
Page 2

Up in smoke

People will no longer be puffing
on patios under new Ontario law
Page 13

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100 candles on her cake



PHOTOS
BYALLAN
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NAGARA
Eugenia
Biederman
with her
daughters,
Audrey
Geithner
and Elaine
Rossi.



Eugenia Biederman's family and friends gather at Port Village Retirement Home last Sunday to help her celebrate her becoming a centenarian. Biederman, who lived in the Niagara area throughout her long life, turned 100 years old on Wednesday.

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UPFRONT

■ MEDICINAL MARIJUANA

Commercial grow-op no longer interested in Port Colborne

DAN DAKIN
QMI Agency Niagara

The company trying to set up a commercial medicinal marijuana growing operation in Port Colborne is headed elsewhere.

Mulleboom Organics, which was trying to convert its Health Canada-licensed marijuana production facility into a new commercial growing operation, announced Monday it plans to open a facility somewhere else in Niagara.

"It became obvious to us we needed a larger facility, so that's when we decided we would exit that site," said Marc Kealey, the Toronto-based company's president.

Mulleboom's 30,000-square-foot greenhouse operation in Port Colborne currently allows individual growers licensed under Health Canada's Marijuana Medical Access Regulations (MMAR) to produce the drug on site. The company had been seeking a new Health Canada Marijuana for Medical Purposes Regulations (MMPR) license for the site, but came under scrutiny from the city and its residents.

"It wasn't the operation we were concerned with, it was the location of the operation, especially because of the impact the residents were saying it was having on them," Port Colborne Mayor Vance Badaway said Monday.

The city had been encouraging Mulleboom to set up its



This farmhouse at 462 Pinescrest Rd. is site of the Mulleboom Organics medicinal marijuana-growing operation.

commercial operation on 800 acres of empty land near Hwy. 140 that was recently made available for industrial use.

"The impact would be very little if not none to any adjacent property because it's all industrial," Badaway said.

However, Kealey said the company is looking elsewhere.

"We're down a path right now," he said, adding that

there are a handful of locations that really embrace it and that knows this is not nefarious at all. We have a very corporate executive management team. You don't want people who make life very difficult for you. This is nothing that should be hidden," he said.

Ward 4 Coun. Ron Bodner said he felt things with Mulleboom "started off on the wrong foot."

"Certainly, the neighbours were concerned about it, but I think if it was totally under Mulleboom's control and under the regulations of the federal government, it would have really no impact on the community," he said. "I can understand if they choose to go somewhere else where they have some more room and maybe are a little further away from the neighbours."

Ward 4 Coun. Ron Bodner said he felt things with Mulleboom "started off on the wrong foot."

ward 4 Coun. Barbara Butters said she would rather have seen Mulleboom's MMPR-licensed facility than a less-regulated MMAR operation at the site.

"In a licensed, regulated, proper facility, there are a lot of rules that need to be abided by," Butters said. "To me that's a preferable scenario than a group of people growing for their personal medicinal use."

Kealey said his interest in staying in the Niagara region is partially because he's from here originally, and because it's a good area for large-scale growing.

"We're looking at settling on (a new location) and then resubmitting our application to Health Canada," he said.

Kealey wouldn't give a timeline for how soon he thinks Mulleboom could be up and running, but said he believes Health Canada sees the company as being one of the country's leaders for commercial medicinal marijuana growing.

He said Mulleboom has started doing work in both the U.S. and South America because of its reputation and greenhouse innovations.

"They came to us, we didn't go to them," he said. "The Government of Canada is really second to none with the MMPR. That's a great starting point for a lot of nations and states that want to do this."

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LOCAL NEWS

HEALTH

Health coalition urges action to save hospital

ALLAN BENNER
QMI Agency Niagara

It's time for action.

If the residents of the Welland area want their hospital to remain open into the future, they'd better start fighting to save it.

That was the message members of the Niagara Health Coalition, the Ontario Health Coalition and the south Niagara branch of the Council of Canadians shared with about 120 people during a quickly organized meeting last Thursday night at the Welland Civic Square community room.

Attendance was about twice the number organizers expected. The 100 or so chairs were quickly filled and latecomers were left standing at the back of the room.

"We're at a time to get active, put some action behind our words and galvanize our community together so that we can do a concerted effort to save the Welland hospital," said Niagara Health Coalition co-chair Sue Hotte. "We have to start now."

In her 14 years as executive director of the Ontario Health Coalition, Natalie Mehra said the Niagara Health Coalition has seen areas where the cuts that are proposed are as severe as the cuts in Niagara.

"I'm not exaggerating. Here we are in a community of 51,000 people, and the former health minister (Deb Matthews) approved the closure of the local hospital," Mehra said, later adding the hospital serves a population of about 92,000, when neighbouring communities are taken into consideration.

"Nowhere in this country are they closing hospitals in towns of 50,000 people. It's unheard of. It's completely unacceptable."

The plans of Niagara Health System and Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, to close five Niagara hospitals and replace them with a single new site, is "the most aggressive attack on public health-care services that I've seen in all the years



ALLAN BENNER/STAFF PHOTO

Ontario Health Coalition executive director Natalie Mehra, right, urges Welland residents to take action if they hope to save their hospital during a meeting, Thursday at the Welland Civic Square.

that I've been in this position, and in my years before when I followed health policy."

Niagara Health System spokesman Brady Wood said hospital administration "remain open to hearing from the community."

"We want to hear people's concerns and we want to deal with their concerns as we implement the plan," he said.

Meanwhile, he said "everything is on track" planning for the new hospital proposed for Niagara Falls.

"We'll have more news to share in the next few weeks around just firming up the process," Wood added.

After 20 years of hospital spending cuts across the province, closing 18,500 hospital beds in the process, Mehra said there's little room left for additional cuts. Stop

The province now has far fewer hospital beds per capita than any other province in the country, and only three countries in the entire industrialized world have fewer hospital beds than Ontario — Turkey, Chili and Mexico.

She said there is still waste in Ontario's hospitals, such as "exorbitant executive salaries and all kinds of parasitic bean counters and consultants and reams of managers," but front-line services cannot be cut anymore.

"We need to stand up now. It's time that regular Ontarians of every stripe say, 'Enough is enough.'"

But Mehra is confident that if enough people demand an end to plans to close the hospital beds, the provincial government will have to oblige.

"We're saying stop it. Stop

the cuts to the community hospitals, stop the closures of community hospitals, stop the planned closures of emergency departments, stop the cuts to staff and services. Enough is enough, come up with some other plan but no more of this. But they need to hear about it. They need to see visible, massive public resistance."

Mehra said the coalition has been successful in the past.

"We know this can be effective," she said.

"It is possible to save your hospital, partly because nobody in Ontario supports this at all, and partly because the (Premier Kathleen) Wynne government will respond more to public pressure than even the McGuinty government did."

About five years ago, she

said the province was planning to close emergency departments in at least a half-dozen small town hospitals as well as a few entire hospitals. After as many as 4,000 people participated in a rally at Queen's Park, she said plans to close those emergency departments were quickly abandoned.

"No more emergency departments were closed after that. Unfortunately Niagara was first, and they closed down two here and converted them to urgent care centres," she said. "But now it's back on the table and we feel we need to take action again."

"They're organizing another rally at Queen's Park at noon on Nov. 21, and Mehra said they're hoping as many as 10,000 people from across the province participate.

Hotte said the local coalition is organizing buses to bring south Niagara residents to Queen's Park for the rally, and she asked people to call her at 905-932-1646 if they're interested in taking advantage of the free ride to the rally, or being part of a committee they're planning to set up and run a very visible and vocal campaign that could include yard signs and billboards.

Residents of neighbouring communities also attended the meeting, including Wainfleet Ald. Betty Konec and Port Colborne resident and former mayor Bob Saracino. They both volunteered to do their part to drum up support for Welland's hospital in their respective communities.

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■ I'VE BEEN THINKING

I've been thinking about faith

FATHER DAVID GRAHAM SCOTT
St Ignace of Antioch Orthodox Church

David Adams Richards recently spoke at the Roselawn Centre and read from his new book. His name rang a bell in my head, but I could not remember why.

His reading was about a young, offbeat character called Liam. As the reading went on I was moved by Liam's loneliness. His parents were divorced; his father wasn't interested in him; his mother was a drunk; his contemporaries avoided him. I deeply felt something of the tragedy of human life as Richards read on.

But Liam was focused positively on building a working computer and a bicycle from scraps picked up at the town dump. And since he was not the only neglected boy, he made friends with younger boys. They would hunt together for computer and bicycle parts at the dump. They would talk and Liam would tell them that there was a God because

two and two made four.

The moment Richards read those words about God, I remembered why his name had rung a bell in my head. My son had given me Richards' book *God Is* for Christmas in 2009. And the style of the novel from which he was reading was similar to what I remembered from his *God Is*.

Richards had a good memory of his upbringing and his experiences at university and with the literary crowd. His book was a kind of biographical or narrative theology or apologetic that fascinated me because it was so unlike what I had known.

Richards decided to write *God Is* not so much because he agreed with the faithful but because he "disagreed with the unfaithful (or those who say they do not have faith). That is, sooner or later one has to answer those who make it a point of saying that you and most of those you love are wrong."

His wife Peggy had a cousin with Down

syndrome. His name was Wayne and he was an ambassador of unconditional love. Richards was impressed by Wayne's exuberance for living. When Wayne was dying at age 31, he suddenly looked at his mother and said, "Everyone is here." Startled, she asked, "Who is here?"

Wayne said, "They are all here and want me to tell you that they have come to take me to heaven." Then he named relatives whom he could never have known, some who died years before he was born. Then he crossed himself, closed his eyes and went to sleep.

Richards thinks that the real problem that critics of his work have is the quest for God in novels that profess to be modern. They believe that one cannot be seeking liberty and God at the same time. But his contention "is that liberty cannot be had without the other, God. That the whole premise of life is to seek God, in order to realize freedom."

Moreover, he says that the best of his char-

acters "seek freedom from sin." His characters are plagued by sin — sinning themselves and being more sinned against than sinning. Richards says that power never seeks liberty for those it controls; it only seeks control. "The one thing that changes this or can combat it is Faith in God."

Richards says that "faith begins at the cross." He testifies that faith has guided him from believing that liberty is bought with power and "that something we pray to is well worth it. Something has always kept His promise, no matter how strange it comes about."

The story of Liam's tragic youth in Richards' new novel made me feel that I could not stomach much more and so I did not buy a copy. And yet Richards generally affirms that without tragedy there is no joy, and that, at that, at least, may persuade me to read it, as I enjoyed reading *God Is*.

Shipwrecks — Stepan Khalturin

SKIP GILLHAM
for QMI Agency Niagara



WILLEN VAN MAANER PHOTO

Stepan Khalturin pictured in Rotterdam, May 1990.

The Russian freighter Stepan Khalturin was built at Rostock, East Germany, in 1965.

It was strengthened to work in the ice of the Baltic region and it could carry up to 4,235 tonnes of cargo in the four cargo holds.

The 105.67-metre-long diesel-powered carrier made two trips to the Great Lakes in 1967.

With the changes in the old Soviet Union, this vessel moved to the Latvian Shipping Co. as Stepan Khalturin in 1991 before being sold to a Syrian company in 1996.

In 2001, it was operating under a fifth and final name of Dana. The ship was now registered in San Tome & Principe, a series of islands in the Gulf of Guinea, off the west coast of Africa.

Dana was working in the Middle East when it ran into trouble due to heavy seas and a fire off Oman on Aug. 14, 2001. The ship was crewed as headed towards the Hallamya Islands, near Yemen, with a starboard list when the crew abandoned the vessel.

The 15 sailors were picked up by a passing container ship but an aerial search of the region later that day could not find the Dana. It is presumed to have sunk.

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■ **POLITICS:** Veterans, groups, politicians weigh in

Should Remembrance Day be a national holiday?

RAY SPITERI
QMI Agency/Nagara

Honouring the men and women who have and continue to serve Canada is a no-brainer.

But some involved in veteran affairs are not so sure having a national statutory holiday is the best way to do it.

Many believe giving everyone the day off work and school could allow everyone more of an opportunity to pause and think about the sacrifices made by soldiers.

Others think it could give people — especially students who attend services in their schools or at local public places on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month — just another excuse to stay home and watch television or play video games.

Last week, New Democrat MP Dan Harris introduced

a private member's bill that would make Remembrance Day a paid national statutory holiday, treating it like other paid statutory holidays, such as Canada Day.

MPs passed a second-reading vote on the bill last Wednesday 258-2.

Currently, the federal government recognizes Remembrance Day in the Holidays Act as a national holiday, but it doesn't require provinces to treat it as a paid statutory holiday.

So, while some workers across Canada have the day off, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia do not honour Remembrance Day as a statutory holiday.

"Our veterans risked and lost their lives in service to our country," said Harris. "It's important to honour them for protecting and fighting for the freedoms we value today."

"When families attend ceremonies together, they are able to teach their children about the sacrifices and bravery demonstrated by our veterans and military. Having Nov. 11 made into a statutory holiday will allow every Canadian an opportunity to attend their local Remembrance Day ceremonies and participate in this important day."

Barb Burrows, secretary treasurer of the Niagara Falls Central Veteran's Committee, said she was at a group meeting last week and the question came up.

"It was 50-50. Half said it should be and half said it shouldn't be," she said. "They do have good services in the schools. I'm thinking if it's a bank holiday, kids will play on their Playstations (instead of attending services). I think it should be kept the same as it is."

Norma O'Neill, auxiliary president of Royal Canadian Legion Branch 51 in Niagara Falls, said she would prefer to see things stay the way they are.

"At one time, I thought, yes, of course it should be (a statutory holiday), but then I started thinking, we have veterans going to schools and schools coming to our services, I'm not so sure that would still happen if we changed things."

Niagara Falls MP and Canada's Defense Minister Rob Nicholson said the government "welcomes any and all suggestions on how we can improve our commemoration of Canadian veterans and their sacrifice."

"We are pleased that parliamentarians voted in favour of this bill and the standing committee will now begin an important study to hear from

veterans, veteran stakeholders and experts on a national Remembrance Day holiday."

Mike Blais, president and founder of the Canadian Veterans Advocacy group, said his organization has been advocating for Remembrance Day to be a statutory holiday.

"It should be and the standard should be established by the federal government," said Blais, whose group was created to push legislative changes that would provide more equality for veterans.

"When we have a national holiday where respect is paid on a national level, the spirit of the nation is satisfied. Canadians are patriotic at heart, but sometimes we need a platform to demonstrate that patriotism."

Blais said he is a "little bit" concerned fewer people would attend services if Nov.

11 becomes a statutory holiday, but not if schools do a good job educating students in the week or weeks leading up to the day.

"If that was the case, kids will want to go to local ceremonies to be inspired. I speak in schools often. I talk to a lot of teens, they want to go, they would like to go."

Niagara Falls resident Nick Ross, a veteran of the Second World War and the Korean War, said he believes Remembrance Day should be a statutory holiday.

"Canada was forged in wars and, of course, it wasn't politicians that won the wars, it was the soldiers," he said. "I think that it should be to honour the memory of those people, many of them who were my own uncle, that were killed."

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'Considerable damage' to Wainfleet home



ALLAN BENNER / STAFF PHOTO

A Wainfleet home sustained about \$50,000 in damage after an early morning fire Saturday. Niagara Regional Police say a man was awoken by the fire at about 2:33 a.m. on Woodland Dr., and escaped without injury. A neighbour said the man has been staying with relatives since the fire. Wainfleet firefighters extinguished the blaze which "caused considerable damage" to the interior of the home. The cause of the fire has not been determined, although police say it was not suspicious.

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■ AGRICULTURE

Cool spring, cool summer result in lower crop yields

ROB HOULE

(MI) Agency Niagara

A cool, wet spring followed with a cooler than usual summer has had an effect in farm fields and vineyards this fall.

"Because it was late putting in this year ... and because we didn't have a summer, everything is coming off late," said Louny Aarts, who farms winter wheat, corn and soybeans on about 1,200 hectares in Wainfleet and Dunnville.

While he has yet to start harvesting corn, he said soybean yields "are all over the map," but generally the bushels harvested per acre are down from years past.

Aarts, like many Niagara farm-

ers this growing season, was limited on the amount of corn he could plant. A wet spring didn't allow farmers out in their fields until late, which meant corn, which requires a longer growing season, was switched out for soybeans.

While yields are down, Aarts said the weather has been optimal for harvesting.

"Field conditions are phenomenal," Aarts said. "I've not seen field conditions like this for a long time."

Dry fields mean heavy machinery is allowed to do its work without creating ruts. Fewer ruts in the fall mean less work smoothing them out in the spring. It also means crop farmers are able to plant winter wheat.

"We're still planting wheat," Aarts said recently. "Normally, I quit planting wheat by the 15th of October."

Croppers at this time of year keep a close eye on the weather forecast, with snow a potential crop killer. While corn can be harvested after land freezes over and snow falls, soybeans must be harvested before the weight of snow flattens the plant to the ground, where it can't be picked up by a combine.

The scene on Aarts's fields are reflective of those throughout Niagara, agronomist Jerry Winnicki said.

"Normally, most years we'd be done soybeans by now, but we still have a considerable amount of beans out there to harvest,"

Winnicki, who works for Clark Agri Service Inc., said, noting there are way more soybean fields to harvest this year than corn fields.

Winnicki said yields are below average and it varies from area to area. While yields are down in Wainfleet ("If people get a 40-bushel average this year, I think they're going to be quite happy"), he said fields on the east side of the Welland Canal, where the soil is generally inferior for growing crops, have done better than usual.

"The crops on the other side of the canal, like Stevensville and Fort Erie, they're probably some of the best crops they've grown in recent years. Last year, they only had 15 bushels an acre, this year,

they're getting 40 bushels (on average)," Winnicki said.

Joseph Schoenberger, president of the Niagara South Federation of Agriculture, said last Thursday he has yet to begin harvest of the 92 hectares of soybeans he has planted at his Fort Robinson farm. He expects the yield to be below average because he was so late seeding and is concerned he may lose some of his crop because of frost hitting plants while they were still green. His fear is the plants will stay green, meaning they won't be able to be harvested because the moisture in them is too high. In addition to the risk of plugging the harvester, the cost of drying these beans is prohibitive.

Niagara North Federation of

Agriculture president Albert Witteveen said reports are that soybeans harvested in his jurisdiction have been average to a little better than average and that "peach and tender-fruit growers had a good season."

Grape Growers of Ontario chief executive officer Debbie Zimmermann said the cooler spring and summer, which had few days with temperatures above 30°C, has resulted a harvest that is about two weeks behind schedule.

She said, because of damage to vines caused by a harsh winter, the crop is smaller than usual, "but the quality is good."

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■ TRANSPORTATION

Trying to bridge the gap

**BILL SAWCHUK
QMI Agency Niagara**

Duane Todd and Bill Thorne are on a mission to improve the way St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corp. operates bridges at the north end of the Welland Canal.

"They've been at it for nine months and have no intention of stopping.

Todd and Thorne, armed with almost 500 signatures on a petition, have been meeting with seaway officials and local politicians in an effort to change policy. It's been an uphill struggle, Todd said.

"We've worked hard with all levels of government but the seaway keeps delaying and delaying and hoping we will go away," said Todd, who like Thorne is a retired high school teacher.

"We know that in the past 10 years there have been other attempts to do what we are doing, but eventually the people just give up. It's big business and bureaucracy."

Todd and Thorne want to ensure that only one of the Lakeshore Rd. and Carlton St. bridges are closed or raised at the same time. They say it's a matter of safety for the people living and working in Port Weller East.

"Don't tell us for a second that you can get emergency services over here," Thorne said. "It's just not happening.

"Sooner or later there is going to be an incident, an accident, a fire — some kind of tragedy is going to happen — and those services will not be able to get here. As far as we are concerned, it will be directly on the Seaway's head."

Andrew Bogora of St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corp. said its control centre is in direct contact with dispatchers for fire, ambulance and police services.

"The moment there is a need for an emergency vehicle to cross the canal, our traffic control centre is giving their full attention to that need," Bogora said.

He said during an emergency, immediate priority is given to first-response vehicles to make sure the bridges are available. If a bridge is already in a raised position, efforts are made to bring the bridge back down as soon as possible.

"We will put the emergency responders ahead of any other interest," Bogora said. "That's our commitment and has always been our commitment."

Thorne and Todd said the situation gets worse when repairs and maintenance are undertaken on the bridges.

"When we live here in Port Weller East, when the bridge is up, that is part of living here, but the seaway sees what we want as something that inconveniences them," Todd said. "They have the traffic to run and they see that as far more important than controlling a few little bridges. If we have to wait 10 to 15 minutes, so be it."

Bogora said the seaway has introduced a number of trial measures to lessen the impact of bridge operations on motorists.

The seaway worked during the summer to try and reduce the instances in which the Lakeshore and Carlton bridges are up at the same time. They also tried to limit times when two ships were allowed to pass, one after another, during a single bridge lift.

There is a website (www.greatlakes-seaway.com) which lists the status of the bridges as well as the CA's smartphone app.

"We are closely examining different measures we can as best as possible co-ordinate vehicle and ship traffic," Bogora said. "Right now, we are still testing these measures."

"Once the navigation season has concluded, which is typically the end of December, our managers will sit down and examine the results. Did we increase efficiency on the road for motorists? Did we incur significant delays in vessel navigation?"

"There is no doubt with these two groups of stakeholders, we have to balance their interests. As anyone in leadership can attest, that is always a delicate process."

Thorne and Todd were spurred to action in early March when the Lakeshore Bridge was closed for repairs and the Carlton St. bridge was up for extended periods of time. They said the residents were not notified the Lakeshore Rd. bridge would be completely closed.

Thorne and Todd met with seaway officials in April after getting support from MP Rick Dykstra and MPP Jim Bradley's offices. They also presented their case to city and regional council.

"As decision has to be made here," Todd said. "What we are hoping is the bridges will never be up at the same time and as far as we are concerned, they don't have to be. It's just a matter of everybody working together."

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SEAWAY

Late season start didn't hinder shipping

QMI Agency Niagara

Despite a late start to the shipping season due to icy conditions in the Great Lakes last spring, there was an increase in overall tonnage shipped through the waterway, St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corp. reports.

"After losing sailing days due to ice at the start of the season, and with only two months left in the season, Great Lakes-Seaway ships are working flat-out to deliver for North American businesses and consumers," said Stephen Brooks, president of the Chamber of Marine Commerce, in a media release.

"This frantic pace is necessary from now all the way to the end of December to make up for lost time."

Recent shipments of grain as well as steel more than made up for a reduction in iron ore being shipped through the St. Lawrence Seaway this year.

The Seaway reported that although iron ore shipments decreased by about 26.5% and coal shipments dropped by 11%, the overall shipments on the waterway increased by 4.5% over the same time period a year earlier for a total of 29.6 million tons of cargo transported between March 25 and Oct. 31 this year.

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■ PUBLIC HEALTH: Province introduces new anti-smoking regulations

Puffing banned on patios

DAN DAKIN
QMI Agency/Niagara

When the government limited smoking to specially-ventilated rooms, Rick Christoff spent \$30,000 to retrofit his Welland bar. When it banned all smoking indoors, he upgraded his patio to keep the smokers coming back.

When he found out Friday all smoking would be banned on outdoor patios, Christoff wasn't surprised.

"It's absolutely ridiculous, but it was predictable," said Christoff, who owns Handlaker Hanks Roadhouse on Rice Rd. in Welland.

All bars and restaurants like his across the province will be affected when new anti-smoking regulations come into effect Jan. 1.

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care announced Friday it will be illegal to smoke on bar and restaurant patios and on playgrounds and sports fields. It will also be illegal to sell tobacco products on college and university campuses.

Christoff said the new regulations are "hypocritical" because the government allows tobacco to be sold and "taxes the hell out of it."

"Nobody will deny smoking is bad for

you ... but they're taking policing too far," he said. "You can't sit on a patio and have a cigarette, but it's fine to sit on the patio and have a car one foot away from you spewing exhaust. It lacks a lot of common sense."

Ralph Blamonte, the owner of Mick & Angelo's in Niagara Falls, was surprised the regulations aren't being phased in with certain sections of patios being blocked off for smokers.

"I thought they would section it off first and then after two years go complete," he said.

Blamonte said he doesn't expect the same drop in business he saw a decade ago when smoking inside restaurants was banned.

"That had a big effect on the bar areas," he said. "With the patio it's sort of a wait and see."

The one exemption to the new regulations is with legions opened prior to Nov. 18, 2013, which will still be allowed to have patrons smoking on their patios.

Blamonte wasn't impressed with that news.

"That's not right. It's everyone or no one," he said. "That's what they did last time and all the smokers left our bars and went to the places they allowed it, so it

wasn't fair."

But Maria Brigantino, the manager of tobacco control for the Niagara Region Public Health Department, said the changes are a big step forward.

"We want to reduce exposure to smoking in public places because of the health hazards and we want

to de-normalize smoking behaviour and protect young people who are more at risk," she said.

The Region had already put a smoking bylaw in place earlier this year that banned smoking on playgrounds and sports fields.

"We were one of the local communities to work together to lead

and prompt provincial changes," Brigantino said. "We want to help people quit smoking. By reducing where you're able to smoke, it helps people in their quitting attempt or to stay smoke free."

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FEEDBACK

Hundreds of people took to Facebook Friday to discuss the provincial government's new no-smoking on patios rules. The comments were mixed, though more seemed to be against the new regulations than for.

"Yeah, nothing says freedom in Canada like telling others they aren't allowed to do something because someone else doesn't like it." — Daniel DeWitt

"Hmmm, how much money does the government make on the sale of tobacco? Cigarettes. Imagine that. I quit smoking years ago, but (it's) not right. What about their rights. Oh, and also the government will reap the rewards of the fines. Go figure!" — Betstee Pawlyk

"I hated not being able to go hang out on a bar patio because of smokers and I used to be one. The difference is it is a risk to others' health. We are adults in bars drinking, why should only smokers

get to enjoy the patio while non-smokers would have to suffer through the clouds of smoke if we want to enjoy it. Sorry kids, it's your bad habit. The rest of us shouldn't have to suffer for it." — Tammy Pitthouse

"For nonsmokers, breathing second-hand smoke has immediate harmful effects on the cardiovascular system that can increase the risk of a heart attack. People who already have heart disease are at especially high risk." — Chris Chew

"OK, let's put a ban on the use of perfume and cologne in buildings, that way I don't feel like I'm going to die because some schmuck doesn't realize you don't smell nice at all with half a bottle of the strongest smelling crap they make out there — the rest of us don't need to stop breathing so you can think you smell nice." — Maggie Williams-Paulisch

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Niagara job market quietly powers up

DON FRASER
QMI Agency Niagara
Slowly but surely, Niagara's jobs

picture is brightening.
Statistics Canada reported last Friday the unemployment rate dipped

in October to 6.9% from 7.3% in September.
But when compared year over

year, the results are more revealing, with the unemployment rate falling about 1.5 percentage points and employment up by 4,100 from Oct. 2013 to last month.
Across Canada, 43,400 jobs were added in October and the unemployment rate was down 1.3 percentage points to 6.5% — the lowest since November 2008.

Vincent Ferraro of Statistics Canada said the number of people employed in the St. Catharines-Niagara census metro area actually only rose by 800 to 195,100 last month.
That implies little actually happened, Ferraro said. However, the yearly change is "fairly significant" for the area.
All are seasonally adjusted estimates, which removes the effects of natural seasonal variations and can give a better picture of true employment status.

Overall, the region stands about in the middle of the pack compared to other Ontario metro regions. Not long ago we were close to the worst in Ontario for unemployment.

"The numbers indicate we continue to be on a slow, but steady economic recovery," said David Alexander, executive director of the Niagara Workforce Planning Board.

He adds it's clear employment and job creation will be a major priority for most Niagara municipal councils.

And this extent the board can be an excellent tool for planning employment initiatives, either through staff resources or its blog www.niagaraworkforce.ca which also contains a monthly release of area employment data. The board is also asking stakeholders to participate in an employer survey that starts in January.

"It's an opportune time for councils to examine what sorts of assets are at their

disposal to ... create a good employment situation," he said. "And also, the investment opportunities that may exist for local employers to expand their workforce."

A modest swelling of jobs in the manufacturing base has helped the jobs picture here, said Bob Seguin, director of economic development for Niagara Region.

Seguin said this is borne out by information from the Niagara Industrial Association. In a release Thursday, the association says more than 30 manufacturing firms in Niagara grew over the course of the year.

The NIA celebrated a milestone of its own as its membership swelled dramatically, surging past the 200-member mark. All of this points to "positive signs of growth," it said.

Walter Sendzik, mayor-elect of St. Catharines and former CEO of the Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce, points to the new Outlet Collection at Niagara and hiring at Stel and Canadian Tire Financial Services as being three other likely sources of recent new employment.

"I think we also had a better tourism season in the Niagara area," said Sendzik. "I'm not surprised by the employment numbers showing more people working."

Sendzik said the real story is in "the details and the diversity of jobs being created" and that's what he'll be benchmarking on.

He said that includes "good paying jobs in the community and a broad range of (employment) options."

The local Statistics Canada results are for the St. Catharines-Niagara census metro area and do not include Grimsby or West Lincoln.



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**IN
BRIEF**

Cadet committee honoured

The Port Colborne 79 Lynton Davies sponsorship committee has received two prestigious awards.
The committee, responsible for the day-to-day financial operations related to running

the lakeside city's air cadet squadron, was recognized Oct. 25 at the annual general meeting for the Air Cadet League of Canada's Ontario provincial committee (OPC).

The honours include the OPC chairperson's award for the overall top squadron sponsoring committee, chosen from more than 100 in Ontario, and the Charlie Korvalinka Award for the highest per capita OPC lottery ticket sales, one of the squadron's major fundraisers.

Port Colborne's committee has won the honour seven out of the 10 years it has been presented.



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Who should get immunized? The following is a list from the recommended guidelines.

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 - DIABETES MELLITUS AND OTHER METABOLIC DISEASES
 - CANCER, IMMUNODEFICIENCY, IMMUNOSUPPRESSION
 - RENAL DISEASE
 - ANEMIA
- CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS WITH CONDITIONS TREATED FOR LONG PERIODS WITH ASPIRIN
- ALL RESIDENTS OF NURSING HOMES OR OTHER CHRONIC CARE FACILITIES
- SENIORS AGED 65 YEARS OR OLDER
- PREGNANT WOMEN
- CHILDREN AGED 6 MONTHS TO 23 MONTHS OF AGE
- PERSONS WHO ARE MORBIDLY OBESE
- ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

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- HEALTH CARE AND OTHER CARE PROVIDERS
- HOUSEHOLD CONTACTS OF THOSE AT HIGH RISK AND TO INFANTS LESS THAN SIX MONTHS
- MEMBERS OF A HOUSEHOLD EXPECTING A NEWBORN DURING FLU SEASON
- WOMEN AT ALL STAGES OF PREGNANCY OR BREASTFEEDING MOTHERS
- THOSE PROVIDING REGULAR CHILD CARE TO CHILDREN 0-23 MONTHS
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EDUCATION

Shining a global light on bullying

ALISON LANGLEY
QMI Agency Niagara

Taylor Dowd is eager to share her battle against bullying with a global audience.

The 15-year-old Grade 10 student was one of a number of students at Saint Paul High School who were interviewed

by a South Korean television crew that was in Niagara on Nov. 7 to film segments for an upcoming documentary on bullying.

"We can share our ideas with lots of people and, hopefully, we can give them ideas that will work for them as

well," she said.

Dowd is a member of the school's social climate committee, a student-lead initiative which works to foster a positive and inclusive environment at school.

Each year, the students create videos to promote Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week.

The production company

from KBS, the national broadcaster of South Korea, came across Saint Paul's anti-bullying initiatives while researching the topic online.

A number of schools within the Niagara Catholic District School Board have received Ontario Premier's Awards for Accepting Schools. The award recognizes schools that create a safe, inclusive and accepting

environment.

"The crew wanted a Canadian high school perspective," said teacher Matt Mian.

"Our initiatives are about being proactive to bullying rather than reactive."

Producer Kim So Young said she expects the 45-minute documentary to be broadcast in mid-December.

"I wanted to do a report on bullying and how others deal with the issue," she said.

The crew spent the morning at Blessed Trinity Catholic Secondary School in Grimsby before heading to Niagara Falls.

alison.langley@surmedia.ca
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■ RUFF RESCUE

Firefighter dog's best friend

KARENA WALTER
QMI Agency Niagara

A playful puppy got more than he bargained for when he found himself stranded on a roof last Friday and had to be rescued by firefighters.

The puppy was spotted on the porch roof of a two-storey Scott St. home in St. Catharines by an alert four-year-old.

Andrew Muehlenbeck was driving his daughter Mikayla home from school when the girl noticed the puppy in peril.

"I pulled over to the side of the road right away and called the humane society and 911," Muehlenbeck said.

"Mik has a good eye for that stuff."

Firefighters arrived quickly from the Scott St. station and sent two members up on a ladder.

The residents weren't home.

Capt. Bob Oleksiak said the puppy crawled onto the porch roof through a bedroom window after jumping on a screen. The screen closed back up on the opening so he didn't know how to get back in.

Firefighters placed him back inside the house through the window and secured



ANDREW MUEHLENBECK/TWITTER PHOTO
A puppy was rescued from a porch roof of a two-storey Scott St. home in St. Catharines.

it so he couldn't get out again, he said.

"We get the stereotypical cat in a tree, but never a dog on a roof."

karena.walter@sunmedia.ca

LOCAL NEWS

McMaster
University

**Autism Spectrum Disorder
Medication Treatment Study
PARTICIPANTS NEEDED**

MEDICATION OFFERS PROMISING NEW OPTION FOR AUTISM TREATMENT

Currently there are no medications approved to treat the core deficits of autism (social skills, repetitive behaviours). McMaster University/McMaster Children's Hospital is conducting a research study to investigate whether the drug **Riluzole** may be helpful with these symptoms. **Riluzole** is a drug that is already **Health Canada & FDA approved** for treating adults with a neurological disorder.

Why is Riluzole being considered a treatment for ASD? The human brain is never quiet: every region constantly fires electrical signals. Some signals are loud and clear and others are muffled murmurs. In autism, the background murmurs are hard to tune out and the brain becomes noisy, making it difficult to receive clear signals. Its like trying to have a private conversation in a crowded room, some words get lost and the message is hard to understand. Riluzole is a drug that may help some people with ASD tune out brain background noise so that they can receive clear signals. In this way, **Riluzole may improve compulsive, aggressive and repetitive behaviours**. Unlike current drug treatments, Riluzole may also improve social skills and help kids with ASD talk to other children, make friends and enjoy activities with other people.

Who can participate? Children aged 6-17 diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD, Autism, PDD-NOS, or Asperger's Syndrome) may be eligible. You do not have to reside within the hospital's catchment area in order to participate. Expenses related to participation (e.g. parking, cost of drug) will be paid for by the study. Participants will also receive compensation for their time as a token of appreciation.

How do I know if this trial would be a good fit for my child? Decisions about medication always require careful consideration. Dr. Bennett will meet with you at the beginning to provide information and discuss whether this study is right for you and your child.

How do I learn more? To learn more, or to participate, please contact Dr. Teresa Bennett's Research office at 905-521-2100 extension 74906.

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IN BRIEF

Trial in death of inmate adjourned until April

The second-degree murder trial for two Niagara Detention

Centre inmates charged in the 2011 death of a third inmate has been adjourned to April 2015. Cale Arthur Rose of Niagara and Jeremy William Hall of Hamilton are to stand trial on the charges. The pair were charged in

the death of 46-year-old Port Colborne taxi driver Kelvin Sawe, who was found injured in his Thorold jail cell Aug. 15, 2011. He died in hospital a few days later. Sawe had been arrested Aug. 8, 2011, and charged

with sexual assault and sexual interference involving a 14-year-old boy. Rose had been awaiting sentencing on weapons charges and assault. Hall was behind bars on a charge of first-degree murder in connection

with the death of a Hamilton resident and has since been convicted. The second-degree murder trial for Hall and Rose is scheduled to take place beginning April 7, 2015, in Welland.

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LOCAL NEWS

IN
BRIEF

College in top 15 for research funding

Niagara College has been

named one of the top 15 colleges in the country for research funding, according to a new national study. In its report Top 50 Research Colleges, Research Infosource Inc. ranks Niagara College

12th, based on total research funding numbers for 2013. Niagara College's research funding increased by more than 24% between 2012 and 2013, up to \$4 million in 2013 from \$3.2 million.

The 2013 figure represents a 52% increase from two years previously, when research funding totalled \$2.6 million in 2011.

"The research funding we're able to attract funds projects

that help local companies innovate and create jobs, while connecting our students and faculty to industry," said Niagara College president Dan Patterson.

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Are movie theatres losing their lustre?

JOHN LAW
CMI Agency Niagara

When you consider the climate, this should actually be the greatest time to see movies in theatres. Piracy, home entertainment systems and declining attendance should have the theatre chains scrambling to get our butts in their seats. By any means possible.

Instead, after this weekend, I'm wondering if movie theatres even want me back any more. It had nothing to do with the movie or the theatre — I didn't even get to the parking lot. No, after a quick check online to see which theatre *Nightcrawler* was playing in, plans were cancelled altogether.

At the Cinéplex Odeon-owned Niagara Square Theatre, the only option to see *Nightcrawler* was the UltraAVX theatre. The one with better sound and picture quality. The one with reclining seats. The one where you choose your seats on a computer screen.

The one where I wonder why I bothered leaving the house.

When it comes to spending more on a movie ticket — UltraAVX at Niagara Square is \$12.50, compared to the usual \$9.50 — there needs to be a good reason: 3-D. Free refills. Anything directed by James Cameron. But to force it on moviegoers who want to watch a Jake Gyllenhaal thriller? Really?

I wasn't going to get burned again. A month ago, it wasn't until I was standing in line that I realized *Good Girl* would only be in the UltraAVX theatre. It was too late to go to the Pentacine cinemas, so we took the plunge.

After paying \$25 for two tickets, the lady at the computer turned her computer around and asked me to pick my seats.

Um... what is this the opera? Did I go to the Shaw Festival by mistake? "What if someone annoying sits next us and we want to switch seats?" I asked her. "Well, people usually sit where they want anyway, it's no big deal," she replied.

So why are we going through this charade then?

Next stop: Concession stand. You don't need me to remind you how painful this is. After taking a hit on the tickets, I opted for a small Coke. It still cost \$4.99.

Inside the theatre, UltraAVX goes for that lounge vibe. Cozy seats, swanky lighting. All I noticed was the garbage left behind by the last people... directly in front of my chosen seat. So much

for being "the next level of cinema," as Cinéplex boasted back in 2010 when the concept was introduced.

As the movie started, there was one last chance to wove me some clarity, senses-shattering sound, anything to justify the price. Nope. Just Ben Affleck and Rosamund Pike on a big screen. Sure, the sound and detail was nice, but shouldn't that be in every Cinéplex Odeon theatre anyway? Isn't that the whole reason we still see movies in theatres?

For answers I went to Mike Langdon, Cinéplex Entertainment's director of communications.

"UltraAVX has been wildly popular since it was introduced," he said, with feedback showing patrons love the option of reserving seats days or weeks in advance. If there's a complaint, he adds, it's that people want more movies — not less — in the format. In a 10-screen facility like Niagara Falls, opening a movie like *Nightcrawler* on multiple screens means something else gets bumped.

"There are an average four to five new movies opening a week," he said. "You've got to make some choices where to put things, and the best option to provide, we think, is (to open) on AVX."

"Yours is the first complaint of this type we've received."

Wait a sec... so it's just me? Everyone actually loves AVX?

If everyone loves it, I ask Langdon, shouldn't it just be the new standard in every theatre?

"Some of the amenities of UltraAVX come with significant costs," he said, citing the Dolby Atmos sound system and Solaria 4K projectors. "These are significant upgrades."

The result, he added, is an experience you can't possibly get at home. And to cap it off, Cinéplex may soon be charging extra for specific seats. Between the tickets and food, it's easily a \$50 night out for two people. And as movies continue to be dwarfed by the best TV shows, that cost looks longer.

So yes, bring on The Avengers: Age of Ultron in UltraAVX. Count me in for *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*. But those days of one or two movies a week are a long time ago, in a theatre far, far away.

john.law@media.ca



IN 5 MINUTES

News and events – visually



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Commander: Verbally called out target, its type, its location and what projectile to load

Gunner: Located targets and fired upon them

Loader: Loaded ammunition into main gun

With time, many crews eventually learned to run their tanks on instinct and hand signals.

Machine-gunner/co-driver

Driver: Forward left; used two steering levers and floor pedals

.30-calibre machine-gun

Main drive sprocket
Transmission

Driver's hatch

Front propeller shaft

Slip ring

Turret basket

Rear propeller shaft

Generator

Radiator

Engine: Chrysler A57 multibank 30-cylinder gasoline engine; 425 hp

Height: 2.74 m

Exhaust pipe

Track idler
Single water pump

Length: 6.06 m

Riding in the tanks had devastating effects on the crew

Tank engines were noisy; they were in the middle of the tank with no covers or mufflers

Engines released poisonous gas; ventilation in the tanks was poor

Lack of suspension system; crew was continuously bounced around inside the tank as they drove over rough terrain

Early tanks had armour too thin to protect from machine gun fire

Direct hits from shells could send rivets and shrapnel flying inside the vehicle

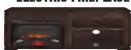
Gasoline engines were used; a direct hit could spark an internal fire, burning the crew alive

Sources: United States government public domain (tank diagram); militaryfactory.com; juneboesch.org
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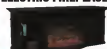


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